

Message Text

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FM USMISSION GENEVA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1823

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L GENEVA 6475

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: SREF SN

SUBJECT: UNHCR PROTESTS SINGAPORE'S HANDLING OF "CAPE ERIMO" CASE

REF: SINGAPORE 3757

1. UNHCR HAS GIVEN MISSION IN CONFIDENCE FOLLOWING
PROTEST SENT BY ACTING HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES
TO SINGAPORE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AUGUST 10,
CONCERNING TREATMENT OF VIETNAMESE REFUGEES ON "CAPE
ERIMO":

QUOTE

HIS EXCELLENCY S. RAJARATNAM, MINISTER FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS, REPUBLIC OF SINGAPORE.

IN THE ABSENCE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, I HAVE THE
HONOR TO REFER TO THE CASE OF THIRTY-ONE VIETNAMESE,
INCLUDING FOURTEEN CHILDREN AND TEN-DAY OLD BABY AND
ONE WOMAN IN ADVANCED STAGE PREGNANCY WHO WERE RESCUED
ON HIGH SEAS ON 15 JULY BY VESSEL "CAPE ERIMO" WHICH
WAS ANCHORED SINCE 20 JULY OUTSIDE SINGAPORE HARBOR
WITH THE RESCUED PERSONS ON BOARD.

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I AM MOST CONCERNED TO LEARN THAT THE SHIP LEFT

SINGAPORE FOR ITS FINAL DESTINATION ON 8 AUGUST WITH THE RESCUED VIETNAMESE STILL ON BOARD BECAUSE THEY WERE NOT ALLOWED TO DISEMBARK. YOUR EXCELLENCY WILL RECALL THE APPEALS TO YOUR GOVERNMENT MADE BY THE UNHCR REPRESENTATIVE ON THE SPOT AND BY ME THROUGH YOUR PERMANENT MISSION IN GENEVA THAT YOUR GOVERNMENT ON HUMANITARIAN GROUNDS WOULD ALLOW THE RESCUED PERSONS TO DISEMBARK AND STAY TEMPORARILY IN SINGAPORE WHILE UNHCR WOULD PROVIDE THE NECESSARY ASSISTANCE FOR THEIR CARE AND MAINTENANCE DURING THEIR TEMPORARY STAY IN SINGAPORE AND WOULD SEEK RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES AS IT HAS SUCCESSFULLY DONE IN THE PAST. I AM PARTICULARLY CONCERNED BECAUSE OF THE FACT THAT THE GROUP COMPRISES MOSTLY WOMEN AND CHILDREN AND THE SHIP WHICH IS TRANSPORTING THEM HAS NO FACILITIES FOR PASSENGERS, THUS PUTTING THE GROUP IN A MOST PRECARIOUS CONDITION.

IN THE EVENT THAT THIS SITUATION MIGHT RECUR IN THE FUTURE, I WOULD LIKE TO STRESS HOW MUCH UNHCR DEPENDS ON AND VALUES THE GENEROSITY AND HUMANITARIAN GESTURE OF GOVERNMENTS IN THIS MATTER BY ALLOWING DISPLACED PERSONS TO DISEMBARK WHILST UNHCR IS DOING ITS UTMOST TO ARRANGE RESETTLEMENT OPPORTUNITIES ELSEWHERE, IN THE MEANTIME PAYING ALL NECESSARY COSTS OF CARE AND MAINTENANCE DURING THEIR TEMPORARY STAY IN THE COUNTRY OF DISEMBARKATION. HIGHEST CONSIDERATION, CHARLES H. MACE, DEPUTY UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES.

UNQUOTE.

2. DEPARTMENT PASS OTHER POSTS IF DESIRED, WITH CAVEAT MESSAGE BE CLOSELY HELD. CATTO

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